



Dear Friends,

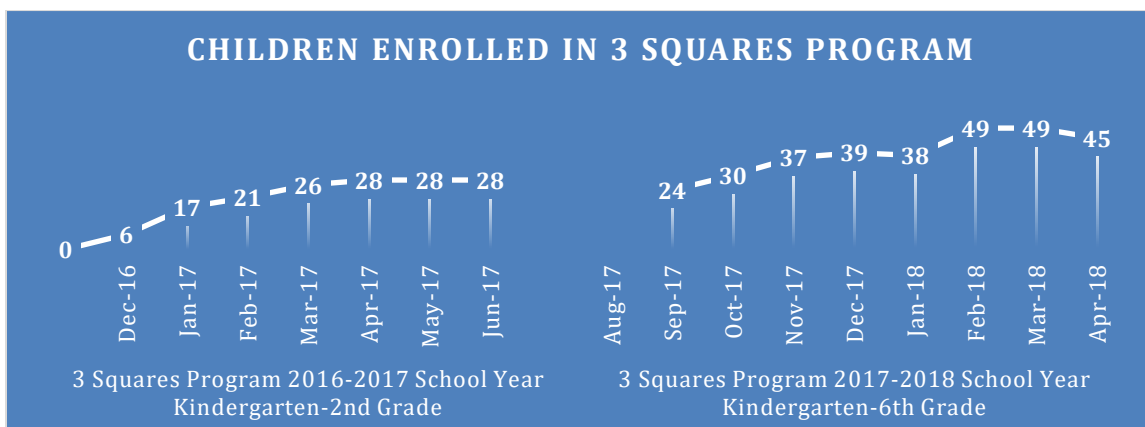
The 3 Squares Program, through Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, a 501 ( c ) ( 3 ), is committed to fighting childhood hunger in our rural community. 100% of every dollar raised will be used to purchase food for the weekend meals program for elementary school children in the Stevenson Carson School District, and to expand our service to middle and high school students for the 2018-2019 school year.

Located in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge are the small communities of Stevenson and Carson, and the joint Stevenson-Carson School District. We are a largely working-class community. Currently, 46% of all students in the Stevenson-Carson School District qualified for and receive free and reduced meals.

Though the 3 Squares Program is overseen by the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church Council, the program however, does not have any religious component. Our program works collaboratively with volunteers, community leaders, local businesses, and school administrators to provide meals for children when school meals are not available. While other backpack programs provide meals for weekends (2 days and usually only breakfast and lunch) **our program is unique** in that:

- We provide **3 square meals**, a breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- We provide **food to feed students over weekends, holidays and breaks**. Last winter break, children were out of school a total of 16 days. The 3 Squares Program provided 16 breakfasts, 16 lunches, 16 dinners and 32 snacks for every elementary student enrolled!
- **100% of all 3 Squares Program funds (giving, donations, fund raiser, grants) goes toward the purchase of food.** Church and community volunteers provide all administrative and functional duties, and pay for expenses out of pocket or as in kind donations. By buying in bulk and through diligent price comparison shopping, we have whittled the cost of each weekend meal down to \$4.75-\$5.25/per child.

The 3 Squares Program started small in late 2016: backpack meals were initially only provided to first graders at Stevenson Elementary School. As you can see from the graph below, we have grown (Kindergarten-6<sup>th</sup> grade).



Food provided by the 3 Squares Program benefits children, families and our community by helping children to focus on doing well in school. A study done by the School Nutrition Association in 2013 found that food insecurity distracts students from doing their best work. Teachers within the study noted improvement in student's energy level, emotional wellbeing, and behavior after the implementation of a backpack food program. Almost all (97%) students reported looking forward to the food, and 60% of students said they shared the provided meals with a sibling. Nearly all (98%) of parents stated that the program was helpful to them and the wellbeing of their child. <https://schoolnutrition.org/5--News-and-Publications/4--The-Journal-of-Child-Nutrition-and-Management/Fall-2013/Volume-37,-Issue-2,-Fall-2013---Ecker,-Sifers/>

To date, support for the 3 Squares program has come largely from Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church congregation, local businesses, and community members. Small business owners have been incredibly generous and collaborative with our cause. Fundraisers and events have been mutually beneficial, and we will continue these partnerships (A& J fundraiser in June and possible fundraiser with Backwoods Brewing Co in August).

The growth and success of the 3 Squares Program is paramount. Memory in a small community is long—any failure on our part will discourage similar endeavors in the future. Children need and deserve adequate nutrition and meals to look forward to. A full belly is more than a comfort; it is a sturdy foundation from which learning, security, and joy can grow. Please join in this effort. Together, we will make a meaningful difference and investment in the lives of children and health of our community.

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